

Friday, February 17, 2006

NTSB Launches Go-Team to Investigate Emergency Landing of UPS Cargo Plane in Philadelphia



The Safety Board sent a team to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to investigate the emergency landing of a UPS DC-8 cargo plane at Philadelphia International Airport.

On February 8, 2006, a United Parcel Service DC-8 registration N748UP landed at Philadelphia International Airport, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, after declaring an emergency because of smoke in the cockpit. The airplane immediately became engulfed in flames and the three-member flight crew evacuated the airplane via the cockpit window and door slide. The flight crew was not injured, but the airplane was destroyed. The flight had been en route from Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

Frank Hilldrup served as the Investigator-in-Charge. Members Ellen Engleman Conners and Kathryn O'Leary Higgins accompanied the team; Engleman Conners served as the on-scene spokesperson. Lauren Peduzzi was the Public Affairs Officer.

NTSB Members Meet on Three Accidents

Hendrick Motorsport Plane Crash

The Safety Board has determined that the probable cause of the crash of a Beech King Air operated by Hendrick Motorsports in Stuart, Virginia, was the flight crew's failure to properly execute the published instrument approach procedure. The October 24, 2004, accident, which claimed the lives of all 10 persons aboard, occurred when the aircraft collided with mountainous terrain during a missed approach to Martinsville/Blue Ridge Airport, Martinsville, Virginia. The crew had failed to use all navigational aids to confirm and monitor the airplane's position during the approach.

According to the Safety Board, a missed approach should have occurred over the Martinsville Airport by the pilot's executing a climbing right turn. The airplane was not equipped with a ground proximity warning system.

Traffic Accident Involving Drunk Driver

The Safety Board determined that the probable cause of a May 1, 2003 accident in Linden, New Jersey was alcohol impairment. An off-duty police officer lost control of his vehicle and entered into the northbound lanes and collided with another car. In the report, the Board noted that had a median barrier been present at the accident site, the vehicle likely would not have crossed into oncoming traffic. Six people were killed in the accident, including the impaired driver.

The Board reiterated a previous recommendation asking New Jersey to establish a comprehensive program designed to reduce the incidence of alcohol-related crashes, injuries, and fatalities caused by hard core drinking drivers.

Pennsylvania Runaway Truck Accident

The Safety Board has determined that the probable cause of an April 11, 2003 accident involving a truck that was unable to stop on a steep downgrade in Glen Rock, Pennsylvania, was a lack of oversight by the truck's owner, resulting in an untrained driver improperly operating an overloaded, air brake-equipped vehicle with inadequately maintained brakes.

Contributing to the accident, which claimed the lives of a driver of a car hit by the runaway truck and an 11-year-old pedestrian child, was the misdiagnosis of the truck's underlying brake problems by mechanics involved with the truck's maintenance.

The Safety Board believes that more than 500,000 vehicles equipped with air brakes may be operated by drivers who, like the Glen Rock driver, have had no air brake training and therefore may not be able to operate their vehicles safely.

As a result of this accident, the Safety Board made 11 safety recommendations, all of which address training or regulations concerning air brake-equipped vehicles.

NTSB Acting Chairman Emphasizes Board's Commitment To General Aviation Safety

Acting Chairman Mark V. Rosenker February 14 reiterated the Safety Board's commitment to the safety of the general aviation community at the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) executive meeting.

"Having a safe and efficient aviation transportation network is essential for the commercial viability, economic stability, and security of the nation, he said.

Rosenker emphasized that general aviation (GA) is a leading force in transportation and the economy and is too important to be overlooked.

"We are all partners in the quest to make safe skies even safer," he stated.

Rosenker acknowledged GA's impact on the commercial airline industry, saying that GA can be a proving ground for new technologies and designs that eventually migrate into commercial and airline aircraft. Advanced avionics and composite materials are examples of this technology migration. GA also provides a vehicle by which professional pilots are trained so that they can enter into the ranks of commercial airline pilots.

NTSB Acting Chairman Visits Wichita, Kansas



David Riemer of Raytheon escorts Acting Chairman Rosenker on a tour of the manufacturing line for the new Beech T6 basic military trainer.



James Tidball of Bombardier Learjet explains the operating mechanism of the horizontal stabilizer and trim system on a new Lear aircraft.



Michael Pierce of Cessna/Citation and Acting Chairman Rosenker discuss the fabricating process for the Cessna 208.

Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker traveled to Wichita, Kansas, to visit executives and tour the facilities of the Raytheon Company, builders of Beechcraft aircraft; Bombardier, owners of the Learjet line; and Cessna Aircraft, a Textron Company. The visit was set up and coordinated by the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA). Brian Riley of GAMA accompanied Deputy Director of Aviation Safety for Field Operations, Jeff Guzzetti; Special Assistant to the Acting Chairman, Tom Doyle; and Chairman and CEO of BRS Corporation, Larry Williams, on the tour.

Board Member and RPH Discuss Pipeline Safety Issues

Board Member Ellen Engleman Conners, RPH Director Bob Chipkevich and RPH Associate Director Rod Dyck met with members of the American Gas Association on February 10 to discuss the status of a number of pipeline safety issues. Items discussed included pipeline community communications and partnerships with states and contractors to further reduce the incidents of excavation damage and to enforce regulations. The meeting also addressed education efforts within the industry to promote distribution integrity plans, encouraging risk evaluation and analysis in addressing the issue of excess flow valves and their installation, and Board recommendations that address pipeline safety matters beyond the scope of current investigations.

Member Higgins Sworn in as Board Member



From left to right: Member Kitty Higgins, daughter-in-law Kate Higgins, USCG Vice Admiral Thad Allen

Kathryn O'Leary Higgins was sworn in as the 36th Member of the National Transportation Safety Board February 15, 2006, in a ceremony held in the Safety Board's Conference Center and Boardroom. Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker officiated at the event, with Congressman James L. Oberstar (MN), Senator Paul S. Sarbanes (MD) and USCG Vice Admiral Thad Allen providing remarks.

Admiral Allen administered the oath of office

NTSB Welcomes New General Counsel



Gary L. Halbert was recently named as the agency's new General Counsel. Mr. Halbert assumed his new duties February 13.

Colonel Halbert comes to the Safety Board after 27 years in the United States Air Force, where he held a number of senior legal positions. He most recently was Director, Executive Issues, in Air Force Headquarters Communications, where strategic and crisis communications were among his responsibilities. Earlier positions included Staff Judge Advocate and Legal Counsel to the Commander, Third Air Force, at Mildenhall Royal Air Force Base in the United Kingdom; Executive Assistant to the Air Force Judge Advocate General; Senior Attorney and Legal Counsel to the Commander of Barksdale Air Force Base; and Chief Counsel for Information and Privacy Law, and for Administrative Law, at the Pentagon.

Halbert is a licensed pilot and flight instructor, having logged approximately 1,500 hours in T-41s, T-37s, T-38s and sailplanes.

Halbert graduated with distinction from the United States Air Force Academy and with honors from the University Of Texas School Of Law. He also earned a Master of Science degree from the National War College in Washington, D.C.

In Memoriam, Capt. Paul Esbenson

Captain Paul Esbenson, who retired from the Safety Board's Marine Division in 1995 after more than 15 years as a senior investigator, passed away February 9. During his years at the Safety Board, Paul worked some notable cases, among which were investigations of the QE2, Bronx Queen, American Legion, and Pride of Baltimore accidents. The chart table in OMS is something that Paul arranged for the office to "borrow;" more than 10 years after his retirement, it is still in use. He was a great seaman, a terrific resource, and a true gentleman. Prior to his working at the Board, Paul was Docking Master for the Maryland Drydock Company in Baltimore for over 20 years; he also sailed with Moore-McCormack Lines for 11 years. Paul served as master of the SS John Brown—Project Liberty Ship in Baltimore (two of the last surviving World War II Liberty Ships, from a fleet of some 5000 during the war).

